

HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis among healthcare students

Julia Mężyk^{1(A,E,F)}, Joanna Gołda^{2(A,E,F)}, Aleksandra Snopkowska^{3(A,E,F)}, Piotr Gacka^{4(A,E,F)}

¹A. Falkiewicz Specialist Hospital in Wrocław, Poland

²J. Gromkowski Regional Specialist Hospital in Wrocław, Poland

³Faculty of Medicine, Wrocław Medical University, Wrocław, Poland

⁴University Clinical Hospital in Wrocław, Poland

Authors' contribution:

- A. Study design/planning
- B. Data collection/entry
- C. Data analysis/statistics
- D. Data interpretation
- E. Preparation of manuscript
- F. Literature analysis/search
- G. Funds collection

Tables: 0

Figures: 0

References: 5

Submitted: 2024 Sep 5

Accepted: 2024 Sep 6

Published Online: 2024 Sep 9

Dear Editor,

The ongoing HIV/AIDS crisis continues to present significant challenges to global public health, with an estimated 42.3 million individuals living with HIV to date [1]. HIV continues to be a leading cause of death worldwide, with pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) emerging as a pivotal strategy to prevent its spread. PrEP is over 90% effective in preventing HIV transmission when medication adherence is maintained, yet its utilization remains disappointingly low among at-risk populations, including young adults and healthcare students [2,3]. Despite its safety and effectiveness, the prescription and awareness of PrEP among future healthcare providers remain inconsistent, reflecting a broader issue within medical education.

The disparities in PrEP knowledge among healthcare students are clear and multifaceted, influenced by factors such as the specific field of study, year of training, and geographical location [2]. Pharmacy students have consistently demonstrated the highest levels of PrEP awareness, with up to 92.2% reporting prior knowledge of PrEP [2]. In contrast, medical students exhibit lower levels of awareness, although it tends to improve significantly by the final years of their studies [4]. This discrepancy highlights the uneven integration of PrEP education across different healthcare curricula.

Geographical disparities further complicate the issue, with significant variations in PrEP awareness and education observed across different regions. In the United States, students' knowledge of HIV and PrEP is influenced by factors such as race, sexual orientation, and the type of educational institution

Keywords: pre-exposure prophylaxis, PrEP, HIV, students, knowledge

Mężyk J, Gołda J, Snopkowska A, Gacka P. HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis among healthcare students. *Health Prob Civil.* 2026; 20(2): 96-97. <https://doi.org/10.5114/hpc.2024.142814>

Address for correspondence: Aleksandra Snopkowska, Faculty of Medicine, Wrocław Medical University, Ludwika Pasteura 1, 50-367 Wrocław, Poland, e-mail: al.snopkowska@gmail.com

ORCID: Julia Mężyk <https://orcid.org/0009-0005-9889-2397>, Joanna Gołda <https://orcid.org/0009-0005-1476-4807>, Aleksandra Snopkowska <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0173-7405>, Piotr Gacka <https://orcid.org/0009-0002-4171-5208>

Copyright: © 2026 Julia Mężyk, Joanna Gołda, Aleksandra Snopkowska, Piotr Gacka. This is an Open Access journal, all articles are distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons AttributionNonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0>), allowing third parties to copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format and to remix, transform, and build upon the material, provided the original work is properly cited and states its license.

attended [3,5]. Notably, white students tend to have higher levels of PrEP awareness compared to students of other racial and ethnic backgrounds, as well as those attending private institutions [5]. However, even within the United States, the degree of PrEP education can vary widely, with southern and northeastern regions generally providing more comprehensive HIV risk instruction compared to the Midwest [3].

The situation in Europe presents another set of challenges, with countries like Spain and Portugal reporting high rates of new HIV diagnoses but low levels of PrEP awareness among students [4]. These findings underscore the need for a more consistent and widespread integration of HIV prevention education across all healthcare training programs, regardless of location.

Addressing these educational gaps is crucial, as healthcare professionals play a vital role in the prevention of HIV. By enhancing PrEP education within healthcare curricula, we can ensure that future clinicians are well-equipped to advocate for and implement this life-saving intervention across diverse patient populations.

In conclusion, the integration of comprehensive PrEP education in healthcare training is essential to reduce the incidence of HIV globally. Future healthcare providers must be prepared to incorporate PrEP into their clinical practice to effectively serve at-risk populations and contribute to the ongoing fight against HIV.

References:

1. WHO. HIV and AIDS [Internet]. Geneva: WHO; 2024 Jul 22 [access 2024 Aug 27]. Available from: <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/hiv-aids>
2. Bunting SR, Garber SS, Goldstein RH, Calabrese SK, Ritchie TD, Batterson TJ. Health profession students' awareness, knowledge, and confidence regarding preexposure prophylaxis: results of a national, multidisciplinary survey. *Sex Transm Dis.* 2021; 48(1): 25-31. <https://doi.org/10.1097/OLQ.0000000000001263>
3. Stutts LA, Robinson PA, Witt B, Terrell DF. Lost in translation: college students' knowledge of HIV and PrEP in relation to their sexual health behaviors. *J Am Coll Health.* 2022; 70(2): 561-567. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07448481.2020.1757679>
4. Duarte F, Rua N, Gomes D, Ricoca Peixoto V, Azevedo D, Graça D, et al. Pre-exposure prophylaxis for human immunodeficiency virus in the medical curricula in Portugal: a cross-sectional analysis. *Acta Med Port.* 2022; 35(4): 242-248. <https://doi.org/10.20344/AMP.15446>
5. Bunting SR, Feinstein BA, Hazra A, Sheth NK, Garber SS. Knowledge of HIV and HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis among medical and pharmacy students: a national, multi-site, cross-sectional study. *Prev Med Rep.* 2021; 24: 101590. <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.PMEDR.2021.101590>